

May 2017 – Volume 21, Number 1

## **How Does Australian-Based Digital English Resource Stack Up? Chinese University EFL Teachers' Perceptions**

**Yifeng Yuan**

The University of Sydney, Australia  
<yi.yuan@sydney.edu.au>

**Huizhong Shen**

The University of Sydney, Australia  
<hui-zhong.shen@sydney.edu.au>

**Robyn Ewing**

The University of Sydney, Australia  
<robyn.ewing@sydney.edu.au>

### **Abstract**

For a long time, Australian English and culture have not been viewed in China as an equal to its American and British counterpart. This is reflected in teachers' choice of destination when it comes to English teaching and learning resources. This paper examines Chinese English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers' perceptions of the contents and pedagogical design of Australian-based digital English learning resources through an interactive process. The teachers' beliefs regarding language teaching and learning as well as materials selection were challenged due to the application of current technologies in the language education. A total of 24 EFL teachers from different universities across China participated in focus group interviews. The teachers worked with website designers and content writers to refine the design of the English language learning (ELL) website and digital English resources. Data showed that respondent teachers were highly receptive towards the newly designed ELL website as well as its content that were developed by incorporating the key features of a popular ELL website proposed by previous studies (Kettle, Yuan, Luke, Ewing & Shen, 2012; Shen, Yuan & Ewing, 2015; Yuan & Shen, 2013, 2014). In the interactive process of this study, participating teachers learned to appreciate Australian-based digital English resources, particularly the Australian culture, language and pedagogy embedded. A reflective process was also triggered in which Chinese EFL teachers showed willingness to re-examine their instructional practices and utilize the digital resources by adopting a more learner-centered pedagogy for optimal learning outcomes.

**Key words:** Chinese EFL teachers' perceptions, Australia's role digital English resources, language pedagogy

## ***Introduction***

English has been the most important language in foreign language education in China since the 1980s (Chang, 2006) with the largest English learning and using population in the world: around 440-650 million (Bolton, 2003; He & Zhang, 2010). English education in China is undergoing a dramatic reform with the integration of new technologies into classroom teaching since the early 2000s. By the end of December 2015, China's population of internet users had reached 688 million, and mobile phones had exceeded personal computers, taking the top place among all internet equipment with a usage share of 90.1% (CNNIC, 2016).

This presents both opportunities and challenges for curriculum innovation and pedagogical experiment in the Chinese English classroom. It is particularly so when face-to-face classroom language instruction remains a major medium of instruction for Chinese English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners to develop linguistic knowledge and communicative competence. Although new technologies appear to have been incorporated into the instructional process, a phenomenon which was observed over a decade ago as "textbooks on screen" (Zhong & Shen, 2002), current instructional practices still place teachers at the centre of all learning activities. It was a phenomenon caused by a deep-rooted hierarchical order inherent in Chinese education that revered a culture of knowledge and scholarship. It appears that real changes will not take place unless there is a change in teachers' perceptions and understandings of the nature of teaching and learning, which is reflected in the language pedagogies they adopt in their classroom practice (Borg, 2003).

The application of new technologies, for example, computing equipment and the Internet, in English teaching and learning requires teachers to fundamentally change their beliefs of language learning and teaching pedagogies by integrating technologies and digital resources into their teaching not only as a means to viewing technologies as integral to the language curriculum, but also to affecting changes in a pedagogy that is predominantly teacher-led and product-oriented (Hubbard, 1998, 2006; Levy, 2009). This is reflected in the current *College English Curriculum Requirements* (Chinese College English Education and Supervisory Committee, 2007) in China, requesting EFL teachers to set up a student-centered classroom by employing recent technologies and appropriate digital resources.

As an indispensable part in teaching and learning, teachers' perceptions, beliefs and understandings of resources and pedagogies directly impact the process and outcomes, particularly when new technologies have been introduced to the English language education. Research of teachers' beliefs has emerged as a major area of enquiry in the language teaching in the past decades (Phipps & Borg, 2009). It examines teachers' thought processes while making decisions or judgments in a complex environment (Ellis, 2006; Shavelson & Stern, 1981). Teachers' beliefs reflect their personal values, ideologies, and philosophies of teaching (Farrell & Bennis, 2013; Richards, 1996; Verloop, Van Driel & Meijer, 2001) because beliefs are derived from critical incidents in individuals' personal

experience (Nespor, 1987). Teachers' learning experiences also significantly influence their cognitions about teaching and learning, impacting their career (Borg, 2003; Eisenstein-Ebsworth & Schweers, 1997; Holt-Reynolds, 1992), as they contribute to the teachers' belief system informing teaching in a consistent manner (Birello, 2012). Furthermore, coupled with contextual factors, the teachers' belief system will determine the degree to which they implement appropriate instruction in alignment with their cognitions (Beach, 1994; Tabachnick & Zeichner, 1986). Language teachers' previous knowledge and learning experiences, to a great extent, shape their beliefs about language teaching and learning (Farrell, 1999). Such beliefs include a range of aspects in language practice as learners and teachers, for example, learning and teaching processes, materials and tasks, and instructional design, procedure and assessment (Birello, 2012; Borg, 2003).

For a long time, Australian English and culture have not been viewed as an equal to its American and British counterparts in China. This is shown in the process of sourcing language materials and making pedagogical choices, often with a visible North American or British orientation. This conception of teaches have influenced the materials they select for English teaching and learning. To date, authentic materials used in English teaching and learning in China come overwhelmingly from the UK and the US. Chinese EFL learners and users are familiar with the official news from VOA, BBC and CNN that is reported in formal languages and limited topics without introducing cultures in detail. American or British TV shows and English movies or movie clips, for example, *The Big Bang Theory*, *Friends*, and *Sound of Music*, are also used as other authentic resources for language teaching and learning. Other than that, Chinese EFL learners and users have limited exposures to other authentic digital English resources, especially those from countries other than the UK and the US.

Language teachers' former language learning experiences, particularly learning a second language (L2) or a foreign language (FL), influence their beliefs and initiate their cognitions about learning and language learning, informing their conceptualizations of L2 or FL teaching throughout their career lives (Borg, 2003). Beliefs also affect teachers' behaviors and assist to fully understand their performances in classroom practice (Birello, 2012). Nevertheless, beliefs and practices do not keep a direct and linear relationship, and they do not always coincide (Karavas-Doukas, 1996). It is evident that teachers' beliefs and practices are mutually informing, with contextual factors playing an important role in mediating their relationship (Beach, 1994; Birello, 2012; Borg, 2003). These arguments, though derived from researching the traditional language classroom, could be further examined in a technology-supported language learning environment.

A recent study (Shen, Yuan & Ewing, 2015) examined teacher's perceptions of web-based English resources focusing on key features of a popular English Language Learning (ELL) website, for example, pedagogically-oriented, tailored for users of varied language proficiencies, and with current and examination-oriented learning materials and tasks. However, there is little research investigating EFL teachers' perceptions and understandings of what constitutes good practice in digital resources development and instructional design through the direct conversation with the website designers and content writers. In order to fill this research gap, the current study examines Chinese

university EFL teachers' perceptions and understandings of Australian-based English resources and pedagogies embedded as well.

The current study is broadly framed from a social-cultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978), particularly informed by the constructs of scaffolding (Hogan & Pressley, 1997), interaction (Ellis, 1985) and reflection (Loughran, 1996). It aims to examine Chinese EFL teachers' pedagogical beliefs of Australian-based digital English resources that might specify what they believe, what they know, their attitudes and feelings to inform the refinement of the website and its content, which may help to optimize Chinese EFL students' learning outcomes in a technology-supported environment. The study focuses on an innovative use of the newly developed digital resources within technology-enhanced learning environments and facilitates the refinement of the ELL website and related digital English resources development through interactive analysis, design, development and implementation.

The website designers and content writers worked closely with classroom teachers to develop and create appropriate digital English resources for EFL teaching and learning in Chinese universities. Analysis of communication between the designers and content writers and the teachers captured the transformative process in which the two parties were mutually informed by each other in the selection of digital English resources with a pedagogy that may impact Chinese teachers' perceptions and practices.

## ***Method***

### **Participants**

A total of 24 EFL teachers from different universities across China were invited to participate in the interviews. All participating teachers were EFL classroom practitioners with over 10 years of English language teaching experience at the tertiary level in China. Prior to the interviews, the teachers were informed of the aims and the process of the research by one of the Chinese industry partners. All teachers showed interest and commitment to attend the interviews. As they came from various regions across China, the participants were divided into four focus groups, six in each group, in accordance with provided select interview timeslots for their convenience. All participants were informed of the research aims and procedures prior to focus group interviews.

### **Focus group interviews**

Focus group interviews in this study aimed to collect data about Chinese EFL teachers' opinions of the ELL website and digital English learning resources that were developed on the basis of the findings of previous studies (Kettle, Yuan, Luke, Ewing & Shen, 2012; Shen, Yuan & Ewing, 2015; Yuan & Shen, 2013, 2014). Teachers' viewpoints of the ELL website and its digital resources were sought. As these teachers had played various roles as language users, mentors, and learners in English language practice in China, they were able to provide first-hand data on aspects of both teaching and learning. Interviews were conducted at a negotiated time outside normal teaching hours so as not to disrupt participants' daily routines with each focus group interview lasting for 60 minutes.

Prior to the interviews, participants were shown the newly designed ELL website and sample digital English learning resources, and allowed time for questions. They were then

encouraged to express their opinions of the website and the contents but not restricted to aspects of the language pedagogy (e.g., content and topics, materials and tasks), website design (e.g., webpage design, webpage informative and directive languages), and website usability). Comments and suggestions from the teacher respondents were taken into consideration by the website designers and content writers when refining the design of the ELL website and digital English resources. Participating teachers, in turn, were believed to take in website designers'/content writers' advice on the pedagogical design in the development of digital resources that might facilitate changes in EFL classroom instructions and pedagogies in China.

All interviews were conducted in Chinese, as participants were able to use their first language (L1) to express themselves more freely and accurately. The back-translation approach (Brislin, 1970), that is, translating from Chinese to English and back to Chinese, was used to interpret interview written records, ensuring the reliability of the data. There was a convergence of interviewees' opinions across the four group interviews; therefore, the collected raw data were compared and reported in one voice by removing the overlapping data to avoid redundancy. Ethical approval had been obtained from the Human Ethics Committee of the University of Sydney, Australia, before the researchers started conducting interviews. Accordingly, respondents were assigned different pseudonyms instead of their real names in data report and categorization.

### ***Data results and analysis***

English language editors and technical engineers from Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, Beijing, China, worked out a demonstration ELL website (illustrated in the form of a webpage in this paper) by incorporating the key features of a popular ELL website proposed by previous research (Kettle et al., 2012; Shen, Yuan & Ewing, 2015; Yuan & Shen, 2013, 2014). The ELL website was composed of four key content areas: Audio-visual learning, cultures and customs, celebrities, and English learning (see Figure 1). All audio-visual learning materials utilized in the website, including the learning tasks, were prepared by content writers. At the trial stage of website design, the audio-visual learning webpage, as the second webpage of the website, was developed for demonstration as well (see Figure 2). All participants were shown the homepage, the audio-visual learning webpage, and Australian-based audio-visual learning materials and tasks in order to elicit their views of this ELL website.

首页

影音经典

名人风采

异国风俗

英语学习

网站介绍

Video learning

Cross culture

Interaction

Know more&gt;



影音经典

More



[音乐] Waltzing Matilda

Waltzing Matilda是澳大利亚经典民谣, 被誉为“不是国歌的国歌...”

(更多)



[电影] Waterloo Bridge

第一次世界大战期间, 回国度假的陆军中尉罗伊(罗伯特·泰勒)在滑铁卢桥上邂逅了舞蹈演员玛拉(费雯·丽), 两人彼此倾心, 爱情迅速升温...

(更多)



[电影] Forest Gump

英语学习

More

文化差异造成的对老外的十种误会 12-25

用英文打探好友的圣诞计划 12-25

关于miss的口语表达 12-25

圣诞习俗: 在橱窗生下接吻 12-25

2013年十大中国网络流行词 12-25

盘点: 2013年十大流行词汇 12-24

2013年谷歌十大热门搜索排名 12-24

热门评论

More



This song is so beautiful!

Figure 1. Homepage of the ELL website

More importantly, this process allowed a detailed documentation of the interactive process through which the select digital resources were being created as well as the reciprocal effect on the designer/writer and user/teacher in the design and selection of digital materials and tasks.



Figure 2. Audio-visual learning webpage

The collected data from the interviewees were grouped and presented through word description. As all participants attended the interviews anonymously, pseudonyms, for example, Gao, Wen, and Zhao, were used in data reporting and discussion. The data were reported in two broad categories:

1. Chinese university EFL teachers' viewpoints of the design of the ELL website;
2. Chinese university EFL teachers' opinions of Australian-based audio-visual learning materials and tasks included in the website.

### The ELL website design

All participants were shown the ELL website and its functions. Respondent teachers were allowed several minutes to discuss with their partners in focus groups before being invited to express their general impressions of the website. Ann, He, Li, and Wang said that:

*The ELL website looks different from those currently applied in China. The webpage design is simple and fresh with key learning materials or hubs displayed on the homepage, for example, audio-visual learning, cultures and customs, and English*

*learning. It will be easy for Chinese English learners or users to track learning materials from the website.*

Jiang, Wen, and Zhao indicated that:

*The webpage design of the ELL website is content-oriented by applying user-friendly functions. Instead of piling up all stuffs on the homepage that might confuse website users' choices of the learning materials, this website appears to be concise and focused with four major content areas.*

Gao, He, and Yang claimed that:

*The website users can obtain the learning materials from the website easily and conveniently as they are well embedded into the four content areas, such as cultures and customs, and celebrities.*

All participating teachers (100%) showed their agreement to these statements in terms of the user-friendly design of the ELL website. Twenty-three participants (96%) believed that a language- and culture-oriented ELL website is better than an examination-oriented one. Alvin, Cindy, Jane, and Zhang stated that:

*This ELL website is language- and culture-oriented, while the present ELL websites in China appear to be examination-oriented with lots of examination informatives exhibited on the homepage. Learning English includes learning linguistic knowledge and cultural knowledge, not setting the aim to pass examinations only.*

Similarly, 22 out of 24 respondents (92%) preferred to employ their L1 as the informative and directive language in the website. Ben, Hong, Wang, and Yang acknowledged that:

*As Chinese is used as the informative and directive language of the ELL website, it will be easy for Chinese English learners/users to acquire and retrieve information from the website as Chinese is their L1.*

The teachers showed their positive attitudes towards the design of the ELL website which, to a large extent, has affirmed the effectiveness of the innovative web design and learner expectations of the study. As another important focus of this study, the development of Australian-based digital resources was examined in the interviews as well.

### **Australian-based audio-visual learning materials and tasks**

Before showing the Australian-based audio-visual learning materials prepared by content writers, teachers were encouraged to express their views towards the English learning materials that they preferred to be included in an ELL website. Ben, Dong, Lin, and Huang indicated that:

*Authentic learning materials from English native-speaking countries, especially the US and the UK, are popular in China. Overwhelming authentic materials from the US and the UK, for example, English movie clips, radio broadcast, newspaper or magazine articles, etc., are included in the current Chinese ELL websites.*

Cindy, Hong, Jenny, and Wen added that:

*Both Chinese EFL students and teachers commonly obtain authentic language knowledge from VOA (Voice of America), BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation)*



and CNN (Cable News Network) news, TV shows and English movies, for example, *The Big Bang Theory*, *Sound of Music* and *Friends*. However, the language employed in these learning materials is formal and official, and the content is lacking of diversities, focusing on politics and economics in particular. We also prefer authentic materials having local cultures from a variety of English-speaking countries.

All teachers (100%) showed their agreement to the statements proposed above. In the next stage, the Australian-based audio-visual learning materials, the song “Waltzing Matilda” with cultural notes and tasks (see Appendix 1), were shown to the participants (see Figure 3). All materials, including the video, notes, and tasks, were uploaded to the website for demonstration. Participating teachers were given time to reflect so that their suggestions would be more appreciated and useful for researchers and designers in developing digital English learning materials and tasks for Chinese EFL learners and users.

**Lesson 5: Waltzing Matilda**

**课程介绍 (Course introduction) :**  
 在本节课中, 我们将一同学习一首非常著名的澳大利亚民谣“Waltzing Matilda”, 它被称为澳大利亚不是国歌的国歌。  
 In this course, we will present to you one of the most popular Australian folk ballad: Waltzing matilda. It is regarded as the national anthem of Australia.

**课程目标 (Course objectives) :**  
 通过本节课的学习, 体会这首歌的内涵, 感受澳大利亚人民的民族情怀, 并掌握视频中出现的单词和表达。  
 After learning, you are supposed to grasp the meaning of this song, and the deep national characters reflected in it, as well as the meaning and usage of some words and expressions.

**Notes** | Waltzing | Matilda | Waltzing Matilda

Waltzing, derived from the German auf der Walz, means to travel while working as a craftsman and learn new techniques from other masters before returning home after three years and one day.

**Task 1**

Watch the video of a popular Australian song “Waltzing Matilda” and try to work out the meaning of the title of the song.

输入文本...

**最受欢迎**

- 1 Waltzing Matilda
- 2 A Chinese Odyssey
- 3 Australia
- 4 Waterloo Bridge
- 5 Waterloo Bridge
- 6 Waterloo Bridge
- 7 Waterloo Bridge

IOS和android版“外研Q词”  
 全面上线, 扫描二维码, 即刻下载,  
 免费体验!

澳大利亚文化节  
 Australian Festival Cultural Festival  
 澳洲文化文化节

Figure 3. Webpage of “Waltzing Matilda”

Twenty-three respondents (96%) showed their interests in learning Australian English and culture after being exposed to the song. Ann, Flora, Li, Jing, and Zhao stated that:

*The sample learning materials are quite interesting. We can learn typical Australian slangs and Australian culture from the song 'Waltzing Matilda', which arouses our strong interests in learning Australian English and culture.*

Twenty participants (83%) began to reflect on their opinions of Australian English. Chen, Huang, Jane, Lin, and Yang added that:

*We have been learning British English or American English since we started to learn English in our primary schools. We were advised by our English teachers that only British English or American English was the standard English. Having watched the video of 'Waltzing Matilda', we have realized that we had a misconception of Australian English. Australian English is one standard native English variety, and learning Australian English can help us enhance our knowledge on Australian culture as well.*

In addition, 17 teachers (71%) expressed their positive attitude towards notes and tasks for the digital learning material "Waltzing Matilda". Ann, Cao, Flora, and Zhang claimed that:

*Notes to the song 'Waltzing Matilda' focus on local slangs and culture introduction, and three interrelated tasks with clear instructions assist learners to work out the implied meaning as well as significance of the song step by step. Compared with current ELL websites in China, which merely dip into the surface culture, this website has taken a great stride in managing cultural knowledge, deep culture in particular.*

Cindy, Gao, and Jing raised a different voice on the task design:

*Task 1 and 3 might be easy for Chinese EFL learners to complete. We should set up difficult tasks that learners need to spend time and efforts on.*

Dong and Huang added that:

*It might be better to include some pictures in the second task that could assist learners to acquire the meanings of unfamiliar local colloquial.*

In communication with teachers, researchers and content writers explained their perceptions of the task design to participating teachers:

*The task design considers scaffolding to help Chinese EFL learners understand the song 'Waltzing Matilda' and its implied meaning as well, such as Task 1 and 3 assisting learners to develop their understanding of the deep meaning of the song. Only those learners, who understand the lyrics and the culture embedded, can accomplish the set tasks. This is to facilitate a process of learning. Students can develop better understanding through repeated viewing and task completion. If tasks are too challenging for learners, they may lose interest and give up eventually.*

Teachers believed that such scaffolding tasks could assist Chinese EFL learners in achieving better learning outcomes, whilst difficult tasks might make learners lose motivations in learning English, which might inform English pedagogies in classroom

instructions in China. On the other hand, researchers and content writers agreed to the suggestion that employing pictures in Task 2 could make the vocabulary learning process interesting and efficient. That is, they agreed on the importance of maximizing the inclusion of digital learning materials.

Chen, Hong, Jane, Li, and Yin also suggested that:

*It might be helpful to include some supportive learning materials of different genres centered around the same topic with tasks and notes. These materials can help Chinese EFL learners to understand authentic Australian-based audio-visual materials at both linguistic and cultural levels. Also, it will be better if these materials are recorded or shot in videos.*

Researchers and content writers showed their agreement to what teachers had proposed:

*Chinese EFL learners can be informed of various genres/text types that are neglected or unknown in the Chinese EFL classroom. A set of additional supporting materials on related topics will be prepared by professional writers and recorded by native-English speakers. Cultural notes and a range of tasks will be prepared as well.*

Participating teachers provided constructive feedback on the development of English digital resources in interactive communication with researchers and content writers, which reflected their pedagogical beliefs of the EFL practice in China, contributing to the refinement to the development of digital English resources in the ELL website.

### **Discussion**

Data analysis indicates that the new ELL website design, developed in accordance with the findings of previous research (Kettle et al., 2012; Shen, Yuan & Ewing, 2015; Yuan & Shen, 2013, 2014), received favorable affirmation from the participating Chinese EFL teachers who were satisfied with the overall design concept. Different from the existing examination-oriented ELL websites in China, the ELL website design is user-friendly, focusing on a set of carefully selected Australian-based digital English resources covering authentic language and cultural knowledge. Unlike traditional Chinese ELL web pages which are often overcrowded with large amounts of materials, the new webpage design is concise and focused, displaying well-selected key content areas such as audio-visual learning, and cultures and customs, which are of general interest to students and teachers for understanding the target language and culture. The Chinese language is used as informatives and directives to provide shortcuts for the convenience for users when accessing the new website for language learning and teaching materials. It appears that the new design with these distinctive features has had an impact on Chinese EFL teachers in terms of the way they perceive and source materials and tasks for teaching in a technology-supported setting. This technology-induced change in teachers' beliefs was further observed in teachers' responses to the design of specific language materials and tasks.

It has been found in this study that the user-friendly webpage design (through effectively employing users' L1 as the informative and directive language for the ELL website), though it still follows the Chinese pattern, has initiated innovations by considering users' preference and convenience to the target audience in the competitive English education

market. Most participating teachers noted that they preferred a language- and culture-oriented ELL website instead of an examination-oriented one. It could be implied that the focus of English teaching and learning in China has shifted from passing examinations to learning both linguistic and cultural knowledge to achieve language competence in communication with the support of advanced technologies, such as computers and the Internet (proposed in *College English Curriculum Requirements*, 2007).

Chinese EFL teachers have a refreshed perception of English teaching and learning. English learning and teaching does not merely occur in the traditional examination-oriented chalk-and-blackboard classroom. Integrating new technologies in a learner-centered classroom can facilitate students to better develop their linguistic cultural knowledge, which is a priority stipulated in the new Curriculum Requirements (2007). This was also much in alignment with the Chinese EFL teachers' expectations described early in the results and analysis sections of this paper. New technologies provide a convenient platform for students to acquire a range of tailored learning resources and interact with each other that scaffold their language learning.

The analysis of teachers' interview responses highlights a lingering preference for a particular variety of English by the participants. This preference is highly reflective of a general inclination of Chinese EFL teachers and learners to learn to speak British English or American English, which is often used as the benchmark for assessing the English proficiency of Chinese EFL learners (Shen & Yuan, 2013). It is evident that teachers' deep-rooted intangible beliefs are shaped by their prior knowledge as language learners and affect how they teach in the language classroom (Farrell, 1999; Richards & Pennington, 1998).

Constrained by their previous learning experience, the respondents in this study initially appeared not too keen to consciously incorporate Australian English and culture into their curriculum design and classroom teaching. Teachers' exposure to the Australian folk song with accompanying images "Waltzing Matilda" through demonstrations aroused their interests in Australian English and culture. "Waltzing Matilda", though not a formal published teaching and learning material, exemplifies a local variety of language with aspects of culture, which is unique of Australia. Opportunities for engaging and exploring different English resources helped broaden the teachers' understanding of a variety of English and cultures. Participating teachers responded positively to the Australian-based digital language resources. This was reflected in their active engagement and a desire for more Australian-oriented resources in their teaching practices, as they believed that exposure to Australian English as a native variety of English could help enhance Chinese EFL learners to be competent English language users in diverse contexts of intercultural communication.

Data also show that cultural notes and tasks to authentic materials are helpful to learners' knowledge scaffolding in the learning process. Previous English language learning experience has limited Chinese university EFL teachers' knowledge and understanding of Australian English and culture. They might not be able to completely understand Australian culture, local and deep culture in particular, as well as Australian local languages and slangs included in Australian-oriented materials. Relevant cultural notes and tasks could assist learners to better understand authentic materials, and at the same

time, obtain language knowledge and develop language competence via practices. However, respondent teachers did not seem to like two tasks (task 1 and 3) designed for “Waltzing Matilda,” which sought for open answers. Impacted by examination-oriented pedagogies in China, they preferred to employ tasks with unique answers, for example, multiple choices and “True” or “False” questions. They believed that open-ended tasks were not as hard as close-ended ones designed for standard tests. They were interested in employing close-ended tasks in the teaching and learning practice.

It is evident that the teachers’ understanding of learning- and meaning-making focused on surface learning, that is, the purpose of learning to them seemed to be linked to finding the correct answer, overlooking the role of process for enhanced learning and developing strategies to work together through interaction. It might not be easy for students to accomplish open-ended tasks properly, as these tasks aim to examine their understandings and achievements in the learning process. The purpose of deep learning focuses on process and interaction while enhanced learning is derived from interaction and deeper learning engagement. There is obviously a contrast between two learning models, influencing classroom pedagogies, materials selection, and tasks design. Tasks designed for “Waltzing Matilda” provided a temporary scaffolding (Puntambeka & Hübscher, 2005; Reingold, Rimor & Kalay, 2008) for Chinese EFL learners to enhance deeper understanding of Australian English and culture through interaction with the lyricist. The engaging process also allowed Chinese university EFL teachers to reflect on their classroom practices when utilizing a more interactive model for classroom interaction. It was found that after direct communication with researchers and content writers, the teachers came to a realization that open-ended tasks were more appropriate for learner-centered and engaging learning, as the process of interaction and negotiation facilitated deep learning and better helped improve learners’ language knowledge and skills.

Suggested by participating teachers, including some more different text-type digital ELL materials with cultural notes and tasks on the same topic could consolidate learners’ both linguistic and cultural competence, which could be regarded as a duplicated learning process (Hyland, 2004; Hyon, 1996). Additionally, Chinese EFL learners were able to acquire genre knowledge that is usually neglected in the English teaching and learning in China. Considering Chinese university EFL teachers’ advice in refining the Australian-based ELL website design and digital materials development could favorably assist Chinese EFL learners in acquiring language knowledge and becoming competent English language users in intercultural communication.

### ***Conclusion***

This study showed that Chinese university EFL teachers, in general, were highly receptive towards the newly designed ELL website developed by incorporating key features of a popular ELL website in China, such as pedagogically-oriented, Anglophone countries topics and easy website accessibility (Kettle et al., 2012; Shen, Yuan & Ewing, 2015; Yuan & Shen, 2013, 2014). The ELL website design is user-friendly, with convenient accessible functions and users’ L1 being employed as the informative and directive language of the website. Besides examination materials, website users can obtain both linguistic and cultural knowledge, particularly Australian-based resources, which, to some extent,

enable them to be competent English language users. It appeared that Chinese university EFL teachers began to reflect on and re-examine their language teaching and learning beliefs and practices influenced by the pedagogy of long tradition in the Chinese educational system. They were learning to appreciate Australian English, as a standard variety of English, and its rich culture for digital English resources. Together with sound language pedagogy, the digital resources will allow teachers to help enhance Chinese EFL learners' language competence through suitable classroom practices. Chinese university EFL teachers may also consider employing some more learner-centered pedagogies or tasks to assist students in achieving optimal learning outcomes. As for the ELL website designers, they acquired the first-hand data to refine the ELL website design and content writing through the direct communication with participating teachers. Though further research is needed to investigate Chinese EFL students' responses to the newly designed ELL website, findings of this study, which were generated from an interactive approach, will contribute to the development of a popular ELL website in China as well as other Confucius heritage contexts by enhancing Australia's role in English teaching and learning, and in turn, facilitate pedagogical changes in EFL classroom practices in related contexts.

### **About the Authors**

**Yifeng Yuan** is Research Associate and HDR Research Supervisor at Faculty of Education and Social Work, the University of Sydney. He is the member of International Applied Linguistics Association, Academic member of China Studies Center of the University of Sydney and Oral Examiner of KET, PET, FCE and BEC, the University of Cambridge. His research areas and publications have covered applied linguistics, pragmatics, teaching English to speakers as other language (TESOL), language and culture, cross-cultural communication and pedagogies, English as an international language, computers and language education, and social sciences.

**Huizhong Shen** is Associate Professor and Higher Degree Research (HDR) Supervisor at the Faculty of Education and Social Work, the University of Sydney. He is the member of International Applied Linguistics Association, Academic member of China Studies Center of the University of Sydney and Committee member of Australian Society of Technology and Science. His research expertise and scholarship lie in second/foreign language education, foreign language teacher education, ICT in language learning, cross-cultural issues in English language learning and researching Chinese English as an emerging variety of English.

**Robyn Ewing** is Professor and HDR Research Supervisor at Faculty of Education and Social Work, the University of Sydney. Her teaching, research and extensive publications include a focus on the use of drama strategies with literature to enhance students' English and literacy learning. Teacher education, especially the experiences of early career teachers and the role of mentoring, sustaining curriculum innovation and evaluation, inquiry & case based learning and the use of arts informed, particularly narrative, inquiry in educational research are also current research interests.

## References

- Beach, S. A. (1994). Teacher's theories and classroom practice: Belief, knowledge, or context? *Reading Psychology, 15*(3), 189-196.
- Birello, M. (2012). Teacher cognition and language teacher education: Beliefs and practice. A conversation with Simon Borg. *Bellaterra Journal of Teaching & Learning Language & Literature, 5*(2), 88-94.
- Bolton, K. (2003). *Chinese Englishes: A sociolinguistic history*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Borg, S. (2003). Teacher cognition in language teaching: A review of research on what language teachers think, know, believe, and do. *Language Teaching, 36*(2), 81-109.
- Brislin, R. W. (1970). Back-translation for cross-cultural research. *Journal of Cross-cultural Psychology, 1*, 185-216.
- Chang, J. Y. (2006). Globalization and English in Chinese higher education. *World Englishes, 25*(3-4), 513-525.
- Chinese College English Education and Supervisory Committee. (2007). *College English curriculum requirements*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.
- CNNIC. (2016). *The 37th statistical report on China's internet development*. Retrieved from <https://www.cnnic.net.cn/hlwfzyj/hlwzxbg/201601/P020160122469130059846.pdf>
- Eisenstein-Ebsworth, M., & Schweers, C. W. (1997). What researchers say and practitioners do: Perspectives on conscious grammar instruction in the ESL classroom. *Applied Language Learning, 8*, 237-260.
- Ellis, E. M. (2006). Language learning experience as a contributor to ESOL teacher cognition. *TESL-EJ, 10*(1). Retrieved from <http://www.tesl-ej.org/wordpress/issues/volume10/ej37/ej37a3/>
- Ellis, R. (1985). *Understanding second language acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Farrell, T. S. C. (1999). The reflective assignment: Unlocking pre-service teachers' beliefs on grammar teaching. *RELC Journal, 30*(2), 1-17.
- Farrell, T. S. C., & Bennis, K. (2013). Reflecting on ESL teacher beliefs and classroom practices: A case study. *RELC Journal, 44*(2), 163-176.
- Gilmore, A. (2007). Authentic materials and authenticity in foreign language learning. *Language Teaching, 40*(2), 97-118.
- He, D., & Zhang, Q. Y. (2010). Native speaker norms and China English: From the perspective of learners and teachers in China. *TESOL Quarterly, 44*(4), 769-789.
- Hogan, K. E., & Pressley, M. E. (1997). *Scaffolding student learning: Instructional approaches and issues*. Cambridge, MA: Brookline Books.

- Holt-Reynolds, D. (1992). Personal history-based beliefs as relevant prior knowledge in course work. *American Educational Research Journal*, 29(2), 325-349.
- Hubbard, P. (1998). An integrated framework for CALL courseware evaluation. *CALICO Journal*, 6(2), 51-72.
- Hubbard, P. (2006). Evaluating CALL software. In L. Ducate & N. Arnold (Eds.), *Calling on CALL: From Theory and Research to New Directions in Foreign Language Teaching* (pp.313-334). San Marcos, TX: CALICO.
- Hyland, K. (2004). *Genre and second language writing*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Hyon, S. (1996). Genre in three traditions: Implications for ESL. *TESOL Quarterly*, 30(4), 693-722.
- Karavas-Doukas, E. (1996). Using attitude scales to investigate teachers' attitude to the communicative approach. *ELT Journal*, 50(3), 187-198.
- Kettle, M., Yuan, Y., Luke, A., Ewing, R., & Shen, H. (2012). The pedagogical, linguistic and content features of popular English Language Learning websites in China: A framework for analysis and design. *Frontiers of Education in China*, 7(4), 534-552.
- Levy, M. (2009). Technologies in use for second language learning. *The Modern Language Journal*, 93, 769-782.
- Loughran, J. J. (1996). *Developing reflective practice: Learning about teaching and learning through modelling*. London, Washington, D.C.: Falmer Press.
- Mercer, N., & Sams, C. (2006). Teaching children how to use language to solve maths problems. *Language and Education*, 20(6), 507-528.
- Nespor, J. (1987). The role of beliefs in the practice of teaching. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 19(4), 317-328.
- Phipps, S., & Borg, S. (2009). Exploring tensions between teachers' grammar teaching beliefs and practices. *System*, 37(3), 380-390.
- Puntambekar, S., & Hübscher, R. (2005). Tools for scaffolding students in a complex learning environment: What have we gained and what have we missed? *Educational Psychologist*, 40(1), 1-12.
- Reingold, R., Rimor, R., & Kalay, A. (2008). Instructor's scaffolding in support of student's metacognition through a teacher education online course: A case study. *Journal of Interactive Online Learning*, 7(2), 139-151.
- Richards, J. C. (1996). Teachers' maxims in language teaching. *TESOL Quarterly*, 30(2), 281-296.
- Richards, J. C., & Pennington, M. (1998). The first year of teaching. In J. C. Richards (Ed.), *Beyond Training* (pp.173-190). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Scott, P., Mortimer, E., & Aguiar, O. (2006). The tension between authoritative and dialogic discourse: A fundamental characteristic of meaning making interactions in high school science lessons. *Science Education*, 90(4), 605-631.



- Shavelson, R. J., & Stern, P. (1981). Research on teachers' pedagogical thoughts, judgments, decisions and behavior. *Review of Educational Research*, 51(4), 455-498.
- Shen, H., & Yuan, Y. (2013). Reframing research and teaching for Chinese English: Perception, practice and paradigm. *Foreign Language Learning: Theory and Practice*, 1, 1-7.
- Shen, H., Yuan, Y., & Ewing, R. (2015). English learning websites and digital resources from the perspective of Chinese university EFL practitioners. *ReCALL*, 27(2), 156-176.
- Tabachnick, B. R., & Zeichner, K. M. (1986). Teacher beliefs and classroom behaviors: Some teacher responses to inconsistency. In M. Ben-Peretz, R. Bromme & R. Halkes (Eds.), *Advances of Research of Teacher Thinking* (pp.84-96). Lisse, Netherlands: Swets and Zeitlinger.
- Verloop, N., Van Driel, J., & Meijer, P. (2001). Teacher knowledge and the knowledgebase of teaching. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 35(5), 441-461.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
- Yuan, Y., & Shen, H. (2013). Analysis and evaluation of Chinese English learning websites. *Foreign Language Education in China*. 6(1), 41-49.
- Yuan, Y., & Shen, H. (2014). Computer assisted instruction and digital learning resources through the lens of Chinese university English learners. *British Journal of Education, Society & Behavioural Science*, 4(6), 844-856.
- Zhong, Y., & Shen, H. (2002). Where is the technology-induced pedagogy? Snapshots from two multimedia EFL classrooms. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 33(1), 39-52.

## Appendix 1: Waltzing Matilda

### Task 1

Watch the video of a popular Australian song “Waltzing Matilda” and try to work out the meaning of the title of the song.

### Task 2

Watch the video again and try to work out the meanings of the following.

swagman    billabong    coolibah    tree    jumbuck  
billy    tucker    bag    troopers    squatter

1. a can used to contain boiling water
2. a cut-off river bend found alongside a meandering river
3. policemen
4. a man who travelled the country looking for work
5. a land occupied by a person who has no legal title to it
6. a kind of eucalyptus tree which grows near billabong
7. a bag used to carry food
8. a sheep

### Task 3

Watch the video again and try to briefly describe the story the song tells. Sing along if you can.

#### Scripts

Once a jolly swagman camped by a billabong  
Under the shade of a coolibah tree,  
And he sang as he watched and waited till his billy boiled:  
“You’ll come a-waltzing Matilda with me?”

Waltzing Matilda, waltzing Matilda  
You’ll come a-waltzing Matilda with me  
And he sang as he watched and waited till his billy boiled:  
“You’ll come a-waltzing Matilda with me.”

Down came a jumbuck to drink at that billabong.  
Up jumped the swagman and grabbed him with glee.  
And he sang as he shoved that jumbuck in his tucker bag:  
“You’ll come a-waltzing Matilda with me.”

Waltzing Matilda, waltzing Matilda  
“You’ll come a-waltzing Matilda with me”,  
And he sang as he shoved that jumbuck in his tucker bag:  
“You’ll come a-waltzing Matilda with me.”

Up rode the squatter, mounted on his thoroughbred.  
Down came the troopers, one, two, and three.

“Where is that jumbuck you’ve got in your tucker bag?  
You’ll come a-waltzing Matilda with me.”

Waltzing Matilda, waltzing Matilda  
“You’ll come a-waltzing Matilda with me”,  
“Where is that jumbuck you’ve got in your tucker bag?  
You’ll come a-waltzing Matilda with me.”

Up jumped the swagman and sprang into the billabong.  
“You’ll never take me alive!” said he.  
And his ghost may be heard as you pass by that billabong:  
“You’ll come a-waltzing Matilda with me?”

Waltzing Matilda, waltzing Matilda  
“You’ll come a-waltzing Matilda with me”,  
His ghost may be heard as you pass by that billabong:  
“You’ll come a-waltzing Matilda with me?”

Waltzing Matilda, waltzing Matilda  
“You’ll come a-waltzing Matilda with me”,  
His ghost may be heard as you pass by that billabong:  
“You’ll come a-waltzing Matilda with me?”  
“You’ll come a-waltzing Matilda with me.”

*Notes:*

1. **Waltzing**, derived from the German *auf der Walz*, means to travel while working as a craftsman and learn new techniques from other masters before returning home after three years and one day. **Matilda** is a romantic term for a swagman’s bundle, referring to a bag slung over one’s back.

2. “Waltzing Matilda” is Australia’s most widely known bush ballad, which has been referred to as “the unofficial national anthem of Australia”. The original lyrics were written in 1895 by Banjo Paterson, a poet and nationalist. It was published as sheet music in 1903. The song was first recorded in 1926 as performed by John Collinson and Russell Callow, and this recording was added to the “Sounds of Australia Registry” in the National Film and Sound Archive in 2008. It was performed at the Closing Ceremony of the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games by singer Slim Dusty.

© Copyright rests with authors. Please cite *TESL-EJ* appropriately.